

Legislative reforms still needed in Gambia

The Committee to Protect Journalists welcomes the Gambian Supreme Court's decision to declare criminal defamation unconstitutional, but is dismayed that segments of the country's criminal code on sedition and false news were upheld.



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According to [the news website](#) *Front Page International* and the secretary general of the Gambia Press Union, Saikou Jammeh, the court upheld provisions that punish statements likely to promote hatred among "different classes" and sedition relating to the country's president and judicial processes and decisions.

While a provision that criminalises the spreading of false news online was found unconstitutional, the court maintained [parts of the criminal code](#) that punish similar offenses with up to two years in prison, according to Jammeh.

"This decision is one step forward, two steps backwards for Gambia, and sends a message that journalists are still not free to work without the threat of criminal prosecution," said CPJ Africa program coordinator Angela Quintal from New York. "We urge the government of President Adama Barrow, who pledged to champion media freedom, to uphold his word by urgently enacting legislative reform."

The Supreme Court's decision contradicts a February 2018 ruling by the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that directed Gambia to immediately repeal laws on libel, sedition, and false news, according to [CPJ research](#).